United Nations A/64/287

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 August 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Item 29 of the provisional agenda*

Assistance in mine action

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

On the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention), civil society, Governments and the United Nations have come a long way to end the suffering caused by landmines. Over 41 million landmines have been destroyed. Land has been cleared and returned to communities. Increased numbers of at-risk populations have the knowledge and skills to reduce risks. Survivors and their families are increasingly recognized as having rights to social and economic reintegration into their communities. A total of 156 countries have acceded to the Convention.

In addition to the Mine Ban Convention, other instruments and events during the reporting period have had implications for international mine action, including the United Nations response. In 2006, the United Nations deployed a rapid response capability in Lebanon for the clearance of cluster munitions and worked with civil society and Member States for the development of a binding international instrument prohibiting their use, namely, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which was concluded in Dublin on 30 May 2008 and opened for signature in Oslo on 3 December 2008. Improvised explosive devices pose an increasing challenge to civilians, as well as to United Nations peace operations, humanitarian and development work and the consequences of those devices inexorably affect field operations, putting personnel at risk, necessitating greater security measures, inflicting costs and diminishing the overall efficiency of operations.

* A/64/150.

** The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to incorporate most current information.

09-45553 (E) 080909

Please recycle

The present report outlines the achievements of the United Nations Mine Action Team since the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/62/307 and Corrs.1-3) in the areas of anti-personnel mine clearance, mine-risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and advocacy pursuant to the four strategic objectives set out in the inter-agency mine action policy and Strategy.[1] The report also includes a proposed forward agenda for mine action.

The road to achieving the collective goal of protecting civilians from explosive remnants of war is a long one and even after all the anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, and improvised explosive devices are removed, a major challenge will remain: to provide survivors with all the support they need to become and remain active and productive members of their communities. The Secretary-General reiterates the commitment of the United Nations in supporting Member States in confronting these challenges.

[1] United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy: 2006-2010.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/99, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on progress achieved on all relevant issues outlined in his previous reports to the Assembly on assistance in mine clearance and mine action.

2. Since the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, commonly known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention opened for signature in 1997, 156 countries have ratified or acceded to it. More than 41 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, and their production, sale and transfer have in essence stopped. The first of March 2009 marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and the Second Review Conference will take place later in 2009 in Cartagena, Colombia.

3. In addition to anti-personnel mines, challenges remain with respect to all other explosive remnants of war. On 12 November 2006, the Secretary-General welcomed the entry into force of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war from the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons[2] and reiterated his call for its universalization and implementation. In December 2008, the Secretary-General welcomed the opening for signature of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which currently has 98 signatories and 14 ratifications and acceptances, and encourages its rapid entry into force.

4. Guided by its inter-agency policy, the United Nations Mine Action Team, consisting of 14 departments, agencies, funds and programmes,[3] and with observer entities, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of Legal Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, continued to ensure system-wide coherence in all mine action pillars and activities and a "One United Nations" approach with full respect for the individual roles and responsibilities and comparative advantage of each of the Team members, through regular meetings of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action at the principal and working levels. Highlighted throughout the present report is the essential role that the United Nations Mine Action Team plays in ensuring that support to countries and territories affected by mines and explosive remnants of war is strategic, effective and efficient.

5. The United Nations strategic goal is to work in cooperation with national authorities, territories, non-State actors, affected communities, and in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors, the private sector, international and regional organizations and others to reduce the humanitarian and

---

[2] Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

[3] Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and the World Bank.

socio-economic threats posed by mines and explosive remnants of war, at which point United Nations mine action assistance will no longer be necessary. United Nations mine action activities are guided by four strategic objectives identified in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010: reduction of death and injury by at least 50 per cent; mitigate the risk to community livelihoods and expand freedom of movement for at least 80 per cent of the most seriously affected communities; integration of mine action needs into national development and reconstruction plans and budgets in at least 15 countries; assist the development of national institutions to manage the landmine/explosive remnants of war threat, and at the same time prepare for residual response capacity in at least 15 countries.

II. Update on international instruments related to mine action

6. The United Nations continues to advocate for the universalization of existing legal frameworks and to encourage Member States to expand those regimes and develop new international instruments to protect civilians from the scourges of landmines and explosive remnants of war, as was the case with support to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008. It undertakes this work in collaboration with interested states, civil society, mine action and international organizations.

7. The most recent States parties to complete their stockpile destruction obligation under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention have been Ethiopia (April 2009), Burundi (March 2008), the Sudan (March 2008) and Afghanistan, which completed the destruction of its stockpile in October 2007. At the ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, the States parties decided on 15 requests to extend clearance deadlines. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided assistance in the preparation of these extension requests for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Croatia, Jordan, Mozambique, Senegal, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

8. Since 2007, two parallel and mutually reinforcing processes were conducted with a view to addressing the impact caused by cluster munitions: the "Oslo Process", with the objective of prohibiting cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians; and a process initiated by States parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons to negotiate a proposal in the Group of Governmental Experts. In late 2008, the text of a draft protocol on cluster munitions was produced by the Group to serve as the basis for negotiations on this protocol. Such negotiations are still ongoing. The United Nations Mine Action Team actively engaged with delegations and provided field-based technical inputs to their deliberations.

9. Member States supporting the Oslo Process met in Oslo (22-23 February 2007), Lima (23 May 2007), Vienna (5-7 December 2007), Wellington (18-22 February 2008) and at the Diplomatic Conference in Dublin (19-30 May 2008), where they adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The United Nations actively participated in the process by providing evidence of the humanitarian, human rights and development impact of cluster munitions. On 4 December 2008, 94 States signed the Convention, four ratified it, and there was one provisional application. In addition to undertaking global advocacy efforts, UNDP provided particular support by assisting the organization of 15 global and regional meetings, including by administering sponsorship programmes on behalf of

more than 750 Government delegates from low-income countries and countries affected by cluster munitions. The Secretary-General, who accepted depositary duties under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, has welcomed the new legal instrument and pledged to provide full support and assistance in the implementation of States parties' responsibilities.

10. The Secretary-General also continued to express support for negotiations on cluster munitions in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as complementary to, and mutually reinforcing of, the Convention on Cluster Munitions. He urged that further deliberations in 2009 be guided by the humanitarian principles that make up the very basis of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the benchmark set by the new Convention on Cluster Munitions.

11. Beyond the scope of cluster munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, with its 110 High Contracting Parties, aims to protect military troops from inhumane injuries and prevent civilians from being harmed by certain types of conventional weapons. Two of its protocols are particularly relevant to mine action: Amended Protocol II on mines, booby traps and other devices, which has 93 signatories, and Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, which has 59 signatories. The United Nations provided technical advice and input to the coordinators for national reporting on draft article 4, an electronic reporting template, victim assistance, generic preventive measures and the explosive remnants of war database.

12. Statements by the United Nations Mine Action Team to the annual Conferences of High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II in 2007-2009 highlighted the need to enhance the existing international rules applicable to anti-vehicle mines and other mines not defined as anti-personnel. In 2008-2009, the United Nations actively supported regional seminars aimed at promoting the universalization of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, an initiative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs financed by the European Union through a European Council joint action. Seminars were held in Santo Domingo, Lomé, Almaty, Rabat and Kathmandu. In line with the United Nations advocacy priorities in furthering all relevant instruments, the universalization of the Convention and particularly of Amended Protocol II and Protocol V, represents an important advocacy objective.

13. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006 and opened for signature on 30 March 2007. The Convention entered into force on 3 May 2008, and by July 2009, 60 States had become parties to it, including countries affected by landmines and/or explosive remnants of war. As of the same date, 38 States had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol.[4]

14. To support the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2006, the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination established an Inter-Agency Support Group to the Convention. As the representative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, participation in the United Nations Mine Action Service in meetings and deliberations in 2008 was

[4] Updated information on the status of the Convention and its Optional Protocol is available at: http://treaties.un.org/Pages/Treaties.aspx?id=4&subid=A&lang=en.

informed by a survey of select peacekeeping and political missions[5] that indicated a general awareness of the Convention and its provisions, and of opportunities to address the specific needs and rights of persons with disabilities especially with regard to participation, non-discrimination and accessibility. The Service, in coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and with the assistance of the Survivor Corps (previously known as the Landmine Survivor's Network), developed an Advocacy Toolkit[6] aimed at disseminating information on the Convention and the Optional Protocol in order to promote greater understanding and assist States parties in implementing their obligations.

15. In January 2008, the former UNDP Administrator emphasized the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies for sustainable development. As part of the active UNDP support of the Convention, persons with disabilities have been identified as a key group to be included in the priority areas of poverty reduction and achievement of Millennium Development Goals, democratic governance, and crisis prevention and recovery — particularly relevant to mine action — contained in the 2008-2011 UNDP Strategic Plan.

16. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights has frequently engaged with other United Nations Mine Action Team partners to promote the framing of victim assistance responsibilities in human rights standards and promote the identification of synergies between the various treaties, with a specific focus on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

17. Anti-personnel mines and other victim-activated weapons, including improvised explosive devices, are being used, often with devastating effect, by non-State armed groups in a number of countries, such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Iraq, Myanmar, Pakistan and Peru. Under the coordination of Geneva Call, 39 non-State armed groups have thus far signed the Deed of Commitment to refrain from using anti-personnel mines, cooperate in mine action in areas under their control and destroy stockpiles. The Secretary-General encourages all non-State actors to cease the use of landmines and improvised explosive devices and to refrain from using munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians both at the time of use and after conflicts have ended.

18. The report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2009/277) indicates that United Nations actors, including those involved in mine action, should be encouraged to engage with non-State armed groups on issues relating to the use of anti-personnel mines and other types of weapons, with a view to seeking their compliance with the applicable law. According to action 46 of the Nairobi Action Plan, agreed by States parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention at the First Review Conference in 2004, States parties in a position to do so will continue to support mine action that assists affected populations in areas under control of non-State armed groups. The Secretary-General encourages States parties to include a similar provision in the

[5] Such as the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in Nepal, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

[6] Available at www.mineaction.org.

outcome of the Second Review Conference in Cartagena later this year, and in its implementation.

III. United Nations approach to mine action

A. Integrating mine action in the United Nations system

19. Mine action has been integrated into many aspects of United Nations work by the United Nations Mine Action Team. This reflects the critical importance of mine action to the success of work in humanitarian emergencies, early recovery, development, security, child protection and human rights for all.

20. Since 1996, the Security Council has recognized that mine action is vital to restoring peace and security and to the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions in affected countries and territories. Since 2007, over 50 reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council have referred to mine action. For example, in the recent report of the Secretary-General on the request of Nepal for United Nations assistance in support of its peace process (S/2008/670), the clearance of over 40 minefields laid by the Nepalese Army remains an important goal for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Recent extensions of mandates also acknowledge that mine action efforts support peacekeeping operations as well as humanitarian, early recovery and development activities.

21. In 2007, one third of all casualties were children, while in some countries, the rate was as high as 80 per cent. Data managed through the Information Management System for Mine Action, developed by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, has aided in assessing the situation of populations affected by mines or explosive remnants of war and communities and the development of appropriate prevention strategies and approaches. Mine action will continue to play a significant role in protecting children from the direct and indirect consequences of mines and explosive remnants of war, as well as in providing assistance to child survivors.

22. The United Nations strives to ensure equal participation of women and men in mine action. The United Nations Mine Action Team has multiplied its efforts to ensure that mine action programmes have an equal impact on women, men, boys and girls and that all enjoy equal access to mine action as practitioners and beneficiaries and, as such, that both women and men have a decision-making role in mine action in their respective communities. In 2007 and 2008 the United Nations Mine Action Team convened national and international mine action practitioners in two global workshops at Nairobi and at the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy (UNLB), respectively.

23. The Stocktaking Workshop, which was held at UNLB, was a high point in the gender learning cycle, in which representatives from national mine action authorities, UNDP, the United Nations Mine Action Service and UNICEF field participants, trainers and gender specialists coalesced around a common understanding of gender mainstreaming, validated the gender national action plan model and made concrete recommendations for follow-up action. In 2009, the United Nations Mine Action Team supported field-led initiatives to implement

recommendations made by national and field colleagues, including the Asia Gender Regional Workshop, held in March, and the development of a pilot gender community of practice.

B. Servicing the mine action community

24. One of the roles of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action is to monitor global threats from mines and other explosive remnants of war. Potential threats and the United Nations Mine Action Team recommended responses are reviewed monthly at coordination meetings to determine appropriate courses of action.

25. Effective planning and a rapid response to an emergency are key to United Nations Mine Action Team efforts to mitigate threats from landmines and explosive remnants of war. Since 2001, the Framework for Mine Action Planning and Rapid Response has provided an overarching structure and approach, within which members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action plan appropriate responses and facilitate the rapid deployment of assessment missions. Using unearmarked funds, the United Nations Mine Action Service launched a short-notice inter-agency technical assessment mission after the conflict in Georgia in 2008 and deployed a team in less than one week to establish a Mine Action Coordination Centre in Gaza in 2009. Under the overall United Nations framework for early recovery, the United Nations Mine Action Team established a Mine Action Coordination Centre in Gaza to assist the civilian population and humanitarian agencies.

26. In June 2008, the United Nations Mine Action Service held its fifth annual rapid response training exercise in Sweden, in conjunction with its standby logistics support partner, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (formerly known as the Swedish Rescue Services Agency). This activity focused on establishing a mine action coordination centre in an emergency environment. The 2009 exercise included opportunities for greater participation by components of the Office for Rule of Law and Security Institutions.

27. Internal or external evaluations were undertaken, in Afghanistan, Chad, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Somalia, the Sudan and Western Sahara. Inter-agency missions were also carried out in Somalia (January 2009), Egypt (April 2009) and Iraq (May 2009). UNDP supported planning and programming through missions by the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery to Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Somalia, the Sudan, Tajikistan and Uganda among others, where mine action was also considered in the context of early recovery, disaster risk reduction and community security.

28. International Mine Action Standards remain an important foundation for mine action programming and are kept relevant through an annual review process. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining assists the United Nations Mine Action Service to manage the review process. Four new International Mine Action Standards were endorsed providing guidance on the establishment of mine action programmes, battle area clearance, mine action and the environment, and

evaluations. Work continued on eight new standards[7] including three that will replace two existing standards to describe more clearly the process of releasing land that has been considered suspect. In addition, a thorough review of all standards was commissioned to ensure that they adequately address gender issues.

29. Introduction of new technologies for mine action has steadily moved forward and more programmes are using more machines than ever before. Machines reduce the costs of clearance and increase outputs in many situations and the advantages and effectiveness of the open tiller arrangement are reflected in the number of new machines produced offering this capability. While there is no revolutionary demining solution, significant improvements continue to be made in areas with traditional equipment, such as metal detectors, some of which can now discern the size and type of metal.

30. The coordination and exchange of information on new techniques and technologies has been assisted through the forums of annual meetings held in Croatia (2008) and Geneva (2009), supported by United Nations Mine Action Service and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, as well as publications which include a periodical *Technology Newsletter*, produced by the two entities, and the *Journal of Mine Action* produced by the James Madison University.

31. While all Member States share the costs of mine action activities in certain United Nations peacekeeping operations, as assessed by the General Assembly, many countries made additional voluntary extrabudgetary resources available to a number of thematic and geographic trust funds to address, inter alia, the funding requirements of mine action, such as the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action, the UNDP Thematic Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNICEF, the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, the Common Humanitarian Fund for the Sudan, the Pooled Fund for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Peace Fund for Nepal.

32. The Mine Action Support Group, which is chaired on a rotating basis by donor countries with secretariat support from the United Nations Mine Action Service, continued to convene regularly. The Support Group provides an opportunity for donors and the United Nations to share information on emerging trends, operational priorities, funding gaps and the effective and efficient coordination and implementation of mine action.

33. The portfolio of mine action projects compiled by the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP and UNICEF continues to be a unique resource tool. The portfolio aims to reflect national strategic plans, priorities and the proposed activities of implementing partners. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General, the preparation process has been fully automated, with an online, web-based system. The 2008 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects presented a total budget of $402.9 million and featured 390 projects from 34 countries and territories, as well as United Nations Headquarters. The high level of participation from stakeholders signals the maturity of the coordination mechanisms at the field level. A total of 101 appealing agencies and organizations submitted proposals.

[7] Standards under development: Information management; Land release; Non-technical survey; Technical survey; Demining machine operator's safety; Application of demining machines; Quality assurance and quality control after mechanical clearance; and Guidelines for support to victims.

34. Contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action up to 1 May 2009 in the biennium 2008-2009 totalled $126.7 million. In 2008, voluntary contributions were provided by 17 Governments, the European Commission and the Common Humanitarian Fund for the Sudan. Assessed contributions, since 1 July 2002, total $250.5 million to support mine action mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions in Burundi, Chad, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Lebanon, Somalia, the Sudan and Western Sahara. In the financial year 2008/09, $63.4 million have been appropriated, compared with $7.2 million in the financial year 2002/03.

35. Between 2007 and 2008, donor funding through the UNDP Thematic Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery totalling $15.4 million supported 26 mine action programmes.[8] For the same period, additional donor funding totalling $5.2 million through the Fund supported global and national advocacy activities, national organization of conferences and sponsorship programmes.

36. The Inter-Agency Communications Working Group for Mine Action planned and implemented public and media awareness-raising about events such as the launch of the 2009 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects, the ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the opening for signature of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the presentation of the Nansen Award to the Mine Action Coordination Centre in south Lebanon and the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, which was featured by newspapers, magazines and broadcasters in more than 40 countries and territories. Media training specifically targeting senior national mine action managers was conducted during the Annual Meeting of National Mine Action Directors and United Nations Advisers held in Geneva in March 2009.

37. The United Nations Mine Action Service coordinated with the United Nations Department of Public Information in New York and its global network of information centres to disseminate messages to local and international media. United Nations Mine Action Service field offices used material provided by Headquarters to support their own media relations linked to global events. Media training for field programmes was conducted at UNLB.

38. In 2008, improvements to the mine action website (www.mineaction.org) included updating the Human Rights Treaty Monitoring Database, which allows users to track which countries have ratified treaties related to mine action. Approximately 1,000 different visitors access www.mineaction.org every week, and even more during special events, such as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

[8] Albania, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malawi, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

IV. Progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010

39. The United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010 outlines strategic objectives, activities related to each objective and indicators to measure progress of implementation. It is informed by "Mine action and effective coordination: the United Nations inter-agency policy" and promotes achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Progress and achievements during the reporting period are as follows but not limited to:

A. Strategic objective 1: Reduction of death and injury by at least 50 per cent

40. The United Nations, by assisting national authorities, where relevant, to establish baseline data, mark and fence mined areas, clear and destroy mines and explosive remnants of war, conduct mine-risk education and provide assistance to survivors, is contributing to the prevention and reduction of deaths and injuries, and the identification of survivors.

41. Recent statistics indicate that the number of casualties globally has decreased significantly since 2007. Nevertheless, statistics also indicate that the residual threat of anti-personnel mines, the threat of new mines and the increased use of improvised explosive devices in a few areas continue to injure women, girls, boys and men.

42. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, improved coordination of mine-risk education activities and an increase in mine action operations contributed to a significant decrease in the number of reported casualties. In 2007 and 2008, 239 victims, including 39 new victims, were identified by the United Nations Mine Action Programme, compared with only 17 in 2009 up to 31 May. With technical support from UNICEF, mine-risk education national standards and a strategy were developed. Implementing partners organized 6,200 mine-risk education sessions, reaching approximately 1.2 million people. Efforts were concentrated within the six most affected provinces of the country: North and South Kivu, Katanga, Maniema, Equateur and Orientale. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo played a key role in providing air support for transportation and evacuation services.

43. In south Lebanon, thanks to extensive clearance and risk-education efforts that continued through 2008, civilian casualties were dramatically reduced. Farmers were able to increase the productive capacity and economic stability of their communities. On 6 October 2008, the Mine Action Coordination Centre in south Lebanon, managed by the United Nations Mine Action Service, was awarded the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award, for which 1,000 deminers were selected. In the words of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres: "Through their painstaking work and devotion, the teams created the conditions for a safe and dignified return home for almost a million displaced Lebanese." The award funds were used to purchase cows for 43 families in seven villages that depend on their livestock for their livelihood and which had lost animals as a result of the conflict.

44. In Mozambique, casualty rates dropped to almost zero in 2009, a phenomenon that can be attributed in part to intense mine-risk education activities. UNDP has been actively engaged in Mozambique mine action since 1995 and has played a pivotal role in addressing all aspects of mine action. In Mauritania, effective mine clearance and mine-risk education in affected areas contributed to zero new victims being reported in 2008 and in the first half of 2009.

45. Interventions in the field of mine clearance and mine-risk education by the United Nations Mine Action Service and UNICEF in Nepal have drastically reduced the number of injuries and deaths. Following the downsizing of the United Nations Mission in Nepal, the Government of Nepal indicated in a letter to the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator that it would be unable to clear its minefields without the support of the United Nations. Hence, the United Nations Mine Action Team has established a full programme to support the Nepalese Army clearance activities and to build capacity for risk education and assistance to survivors.

46. The northern regions of Somalia have also seen a dramatic reduction in deaths and injuries, due in part to UNDP-supported work. In both "Puntland" and "Somaliland", rates of injuries and deaths have dropped well below the 50 per cent target. UNDP provided technical expertise to support mine action institutions by training nine national clearance teams. In south central Somalia, unverified data suggests that the numbers of victims of mines and explosive remnants of war may be increasing. The United Nations Mine Action Service is beginning to build capacity in this region, conducting surveys of affected communities and providing mine-risk education, but the security situation has impeded progress and there is an urgent need for more victim assistance in south central Somalia.

47. In Sri Lanka, between 2005 and March 2009, despite an increase in reported mine-related incidents in the north and the east of the country, no deaths from landmines and explosive remnants of war were reported and injuries decreased by 80 per cent. The escalating humanitarian situation in the north in April 2009 has led to new reports of patients with mine/explosive remnants of war injuries arriving at hospitals. Official and verified data are, however, not available. The overall reduction in casualties over the past two years is largely due to a successful programme managed by the Government and implemented by the army and several NGOs, in addition to mine-risk education activities that have been carried out with technical support from UNICEF, which has also partnered with Government and local organizations to assist over 13,000 persons with disabilities.

48. Thanks to clearance and mine-risk education efforts, the Sudan is also reaching the near-zero casualty rate after a brief rise in the number of reported victims, due to increased population movement in 2006-2007. The demining component of the World Food Programme (WFP) "Emergency road repair and mine clearance of key transport routes" project removed over 200,000 mines and unexploded ordnance, with 220 km of roads demined in 2008. WFP is handing over the demining activity to the United Nations Mine Action Office, which has agreed to take on mine clearance priorities of the project. Open routes have facilitated the return of displaced persons, economic trade and businesses, humanitarian delivery, and pre-positioning of WFP food assistance in remote areas that become inaccessible during the rainy season. WFP now delivers the majority of its food assistance by road in South Sudan and only uses air drops when road access is cut

off by heavy rains and floods. There is also a comprehensive victim assistance programme in the Sudan, monitored and evaluated by the United Nations, in coordination with the national authorities.

49. In Eritrea, the recent development of a national database on persons with disabilities, in collaboration with the Eritrean Demining Authority and the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare, confirms that most accidents happen to civilians, in particular children, following their livestock or playing. An integrated team of trained mine-risk education and mine/unexploded ordnance clearance has been deployed with support from UNDP and UNICEF. The United Nations also supported the implementation of community-based rehabilitation programmes for survivors. The contamination is, however still large, and between 2007 and 2008, casualties increased by about 30 per cent.

50. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the drought of 2007 and 2008 forced shepherds into areas contaminated by explosive remnants of war. This more than doubled the number of deaths in 2008. To alleviate the situation for landmine and explosive remnants of war survivors, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and civil society have established a victim assistance project in the region. The project strengthens the emergency response and provides psychological and physical rehabilitation to, and socio-economic rehabilitation of, persons with disabilities. UNDP and UNICEF are supporting the Government of Iraq in meeting its obligations under the Mine Ban Convention through the establishment of a regulatory framework, the dissemination of nationwide surveys and the development of national strategies, policies and capacities for all pillars of mine action. An increase in casualties has also been registered in Jordan, where most of the incidents are related to people collecting unexploded ordnance, and for the same reason in Zambia, where UNICEF has provided mine-risk education to refugee populations.

51. In other areas, the number of reported casualties has remained stable despite strenuous clearance and mine-risk education efforts. In Afghanistan, the influx of returnees who are unfamiliar with their surroundings, coupled with the impact of poverty and scrap metal collection, is the cause of most civilian casualties. In this context, the United Nations provides support to the Government to develop its capacity and strengthen its response to persons with disabilities. Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Russian Federation (Chechen Republic), Tajikistan and Uganda saw a slightly decreasing trend, while still dealing with the movement of internally displaced persons, children playing with unexploded ordnance and border area incidents. Some countries, including Uganda, have been able to develop comprehensive plans for victim assistance. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF supported national strategic objectives and the mitigation of the impact of landmines. In some countries and territories, such as the Chechen Republic (Russian Federation), where UNICEF conducted mine-risk education in every secondary school, more can be done to multiply employment opportunities for survivors and provide psychosocial assistance.

52. In addition to civilian victims of mines and explosive remnants of war, personnel involved in removing those hazards continue to be killed and injured. The Secretary-General expresses his appreciation to those who have lost their lives or have been maimed by mines or explosive remnants of war and extends his sympathy to their families.

B. Strategic objective 2: Mitigate the risk to community livelihoods and expand freedom of movement for at least 80 per cent of the most seriously affected communities

53. Mines and explosive remnants of war diminish farmers' livelihoods and impede housing, resettlement and grazing of livestock. The United Nations assists in the identification of and prioritization among those communities suffering the highest levels of socio-economic impact and restriction of movement, focusing on releasing land for productive use and ensuring adequate monitoring systems to measure progress. The goal is to make available land and transport routes and to ensure freedom of movement and access to essential infrastructure.

54. Surveys of suspected areas, conducted in 13 countries and territories — Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Mauritania, Mozambique, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda and Zambia — indicate that the number of cleared communities, the kilometres of roads cleared and area of land released have substantially increased. This has allowed for the return of communities, increased land and infrastructure available for grazing, agriculture, road development and economic development projects.

55. In Afghanistan, the number of affected communities that were cleared of explosive hazards has doubled in the reporting period, although hazards, including improvised explosive devices, continue to be discovered. The clearance of power lines from Uzbekistan, which led to increased electricity supply to Kabul, is an example of the benefits of mine action. In Afghanistan, the clearance of a copper mine will result in the creation of hundreds of jobs and a boost to the national economy. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, up to 1,631 communities per annum have benefited from mine action activities carried out by UNDP and UNICEF in cooperation with the municipalities.

56. In eastern Chad, the Mine Action Unit of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) was able to confirm 211 communities free of impact. The Secretary-General hopes that future MINURCAT budgets will continue to fund road verification programmes in eastern Chad. In Cyprus, with funding from the European Commission, a major crossing point was opened in Nicosia, and three minefields were cleared with 82 per cent of the mined area in the buffer zone now cleared. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a nationwide landmine impact survey has not been possible; however, mine action operations have resulted in the clearance of more than 1.2 square kilometres of land, and the opening of roads used by local communities and humanitarian organizations. More recently, clearance teams were deployed in Goma and its environs, where mine-risk education was also provided. In Ethiopia, a more comprehensive picture of contamination was developed with continued technical advice, resource mobilization, capacity development and quality assurance provided by UNDP. Nearly 16 square kilometres of suspect land were released to some 130,000 people and put into productive use.

57. In Eritrea, approximately 7,500 displaced persons returned home after clearance of key infrastructure. The requirements of the country for addressing humanitarian challenges, such as ensuring the safe return of internally displaced persons in Debub and Gash Barka, and contributing to food security, remain high. In Iraq, where no records have been kept since the beginning of the recent conflict,

approximately 3,300 communities were affected and 220 are now free of impact. The United Nations supported the clearance of some 15 square kilometres of land that benefited approximately 1,500 farmers and their families. UNICEF, in coordination with UNDP and the National Directorate of Mine Action, conducts mine-risk education programmes, strengthens national capacity and supports the establishment of a victim surveillance mechanism. The Secretary-General remains concerned that civilian demining efforts have not resumed fully since December 2008 and encourages the Government of Iraq to facilitate such efforts.

58. In Lebanon, in 2007-2008, the Lebanon Mine Action Centre, together with the south Lebanon United Nations Mine Action Centre, coordinated the clearance or release through other mine action techniques of over 42 square kilometres of land contaminated by cluster munitions. Over 150,000 bomblets and 16,000 other explosive remnants of war were found and destroyed. Since January 2009, the remaining United Nations Mine Action Service staff has been supporting both the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and troop-contributing countries. In Mozambique, just under 5 square kilometres of land have been cleared since 2007 from a baseline of 541 affected areas, representing approximately 12 square kilometres. Release of land known or suspected to contain mines has had a significant socio-economic impact and further clearance will contribute to the objectives of the Government's poverty reduction strategy.

59. In Nepal, the United Nations Mine Action Team has provided assistance in measuring the landmine and explosive remnants of war problem and strengthening national capacity. Progress has been made in the clearance of military minefields, allowing the development and expansion of communication sites, as well as a power station that will increase electricity output by 10 per cent. Significantly, the United Nations has overseen the destruction of over 18,000 improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war, mostly in support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

60. In Sri Lanka, conflict during the reporting period resulted in new mine and explosive remnants of war contamination in some areas and, for a period, the suspension of all mine action activities, including clearance and survey. The Government and army have worked to clear these areas with the support of UNDP, UNICEF and several NGOs, which have been scaling up to meet the clearance demands. In areas not affected by the fighting, battle area clearance and demining made available a reported 300 square kilometres of land to displaced populations for resettlement, productive use, transport routes and other purposes.

61. Progress has been made in the Somali region of "Somaliland", where since 2005, a third of all suspect areas have been returned to communities and clearance has opened roads and provided access to schools. UNDP has supported the provision of mine-risk education in "Somaliland", which in 2008 reached 71,677 people. In the Somali region of "Puntland", a United Nations-supported NGO clearance team resumed operations in August 2008. Thus far 2,642 explosive remnants of war items have been removed and "Puntland's" last remaining stockpile of anti-personnel landmines has been destroyed. Mine-risk education remains limited, although UNICEF has included the issue in its work on child protection. There has, however, been progress in mine-risk education in south central Somalia, with the United Nations Mine Action Programme reaching 26,343 individuals in 2008 and 4,782 in

2009. United Nations agencies have also collaborated to provide emergency mine-risk education for internally displaced persons prior to any return.

62. In the Sudan, the landmine impact survey completed in June 2009 recorded 65 impacted communities and 162 suspected hazardous areas in the reporting period, adding to a total of 268 impacted communities and 605 suspected hazardous areas. Major accomplishments were made in route clearance with the north and south of the country now joined by road as well as 241 suspected hazardous areas cleared in a number of highly impacted communities. In Tajikistan, it was reported that nearly 60 per cent of pastures are underutilized due to the threat posed by explosive remnants of war. In addition to the support provided by UNDP to the national programme managed by the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre, UNICEF, pending the Government's approval, intends to support mine-risk education in schools, while also multiplying education efforts outside the school system. In northern Uganda, through its support to mine clearance, UNDP facilitated the return of more than 1 million displaced persons and ensured that clearance and risk education was adequately addressed. In 2008 alone, clearance activities by the Government, with United Nations support, released over 77 square kilometres of land for agricultural use and transport routes. In Mauritania, the adoption of a land release policy, combined with clearance efforts, enabled the release of 14 square kilometres of land in 2008.

63. In Zambia, UNDP, with NGO support, assisted in the conduct of a nationwide survey to assist the country in meeting its obligations under the Convention. In coordination with UNICEF and UNHCR, UNDP provided mine-risk education for the refugee community. In 2008, support was given to the Government in linking clearance tasks with development.

64. These are considerable achievements. Nevertheless, much remains to be done and the United Nations still faces challenges in countries and territories that have witnessed new or renewed conflicts or where post-conflict reconstruction is hindered by a lack of security, poor infrastructure, weak national coordination mechanisms, or funding obstacles. Nationwide surveys are still under development in some countries and territories. The United Nations, with national mine action practitioners, in coordination with humanitarian workers and peacekeepers and with the generous support of donor countries, remains committed to the investment that is mine action, to enable affected communities to regain freedom of movement and improve their socio-economic situation.

C. Strategic objective 3: Integration of mine action needs into national development and reconstruction plans and budgets in at least 15 countries

65. Mine action is not conducted in isolation, but is, rather, integrated into development strategies and promotes national ownership. The United Nations provides support to national authorities to develop the capacity necessary to manage and coordinate all aspects of mine action, and seeks to ensure that transition plans from assisted programmes to nationally managed ones are sustainable. The United

Nations assisted 26 countries and territories[9] in integrating mine action into their national development plans and budgets and to mobilize national resources to finance mine action activities.

66. Several countries have made significant progress in integrating mine action into their national development plans with the support of UNDP and other United Nations partners. For example, both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tajikistan have integrated mine action into their poverty reduction strategy papers. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the national mine action strategy for 2009-2019 was developed and strengthened with support from UNDP and UNICEF, which contributed funds and technical assistance. Bosnia and Herzegovina has also identified a priority for its United Nations Development Assistance Framework human security target outcomes 2010-2014, in which the Government will adopt a regulatory policy and institutional framework to address the threat posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Cambodia, Chad, Senegal, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tajikistan and Yemen have also integrated mine action into their United Nations development assistance frameworks.

67. In Eritrea, with UNDP support, the demining authority has established a strategic plan for mine action through 2009. The plan addresses the goals of the strategic objectives, and the Government has developed national capacities to deal with mine action problems. In Ethiopia, the national mine action authority has also established a national strategic plan for 2006-2011 with support from the United Nations and Cranfield University.

68. In Albania, mine action has been integrated into the National Action Plan for Pre-Accession to the European Union. The Government of Azerbaijan has included the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action into its National Plan on Socio-economic Development, and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has identified mine action as one of the critical development areas to be included in its United Nations development plan.

69. In Mozambique, the Government's Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty 2005-2009 emphasizes the importance of addressing mine-contamination problems in the context of sustainable development. The plan will be extended to 2011.

70. In Cambodia, mine action has been integrated into the National Strategic Development Plan, and a ninth Millennium Development Goal has been created to address victim assistance and mine action. The Lao People's Democratic Republic's national strategic plan for mine and unexploded ordnance action, "The Safe Path Forward" will be integrated into the Government's National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy.

71. In Sri Lanka, mine action has been included in development plans at the district and district divisional level. For Uganda, mine action is part of the Country Programme Action Plan and has been fully integrated in the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan, the main Government framework for stabilization and recovery in the northern region.

[9] Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kosovo, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, the Russian Federation (Chechen Republic), Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.

72. The United Nations provided guidance to the Government of Afghanistan in determining realistic targets for the Afghan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which aims to reduce the contaminated area by 70 per cent by 2011. The United Nations is also supporting the Republic of Cyprus in achieving its commitments to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention by clearing minefields within the United Nations-administered buffer zone with financial support from the European Commission and recently the Government of Cyprus.

73. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mine action is not yet reflected in national plans, but the United Nations is facilitating efforts by the Government — which the Secretary-General fully supports — to adopt a mine action law and endorse a national structure. In Eritrea, following the establishment of a national mine action authority, UNDP has supported the adoption of the National Mine Action Strategic Plan that indicates Eritrea's commitment to the coordination and management of its national mine action programme, and UNICEF is supporting the existing national capacity with regard to mine-risk education and victim surveillance. In Ethiopia, humanitarian demining carried out with the assistance of the United Nations is expected to contribute to the attainment of all eight key elements of the country's poverty reduction strategy.

74. In Iraq, the integration of mine action into national plans is pending approval, in 2009, of the new National Development Strategy. UNDP has supported the Ministry of the Environment in integrating mine action into the new National Development Strategy and is developing cost-sharing arrangements with the Government. In Jordan, mine action is factored into the district development planning process and the United Nations supported the development and implementation of the five-year national mine action plan. Mine action in Lebanon, Mauritania and Mozambique is linked to national development and reconstruction plans through ad hoc coordination mechanisms, and UNDP was instrumental in the development of new national mine action policies, which will enable formal integration of mine action into the development and reconstruction sectors.

75. In Nepal, the United Nations helped to ensure that mine action was included in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Agreement on Monitoring the Management of Arms and Armies, which constitute the legal framework for subsequent legislation. The United Nations is also working to strengthen systematic coordination and prioritization mechanisms and to mainstream mine action into the United Nations country team planning, and is continuing its engagement with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction on mine action tasks.

76. In the "Somaliland" region of Somalia, mine action forms a part of development and reconstruction plans for flood protection and road construction. In January 2009, "Somaliland" passed legislation banning anti-personnel landmines that is reflective of the main provisions of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and which establishes guidelines for implementation monitoring.

77. In the Sudan, the Five-Year Strategic Plan 2007-2011 of the Government of National Unity includes mine action strategic goals. The Government of National Unity supported the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, which called for mine action centres to be established. The Government of South Sudan developed a five-year mine action plan and the United Nations supports close collaboration in the clearance priorities required by the authorities. In Thailand, Tajikistan and Uganda, mine action is integrated into national

development plans, which require mine action providers to coordinate their efforts nationally. In Zambia, the United Nations has supported the development of an interim mine action strategy until such time as the ongoing nationwide survey is completed.

78. The United Nations supports efforts to ensure the rights of landmine and explosive remnants of war survivors within the context of national programmes and facilities for persons with disabilities. The reporting obligation established under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities offers insight into monitoring progress towards the achievement of this strategic objective. To support field colleagues in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the system of monitoring the Convention, the United Nations Mine Action Service developed a database on the www.mineaction.org website. This database enables field colleagues to contribute to national reporting, either by providing data to the national report, or to the United Nations counterpart that is submitting information to the treaty body.

79. The United Nations Mine Action Team is also monitoring the status of signature and ratification of the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and the associated harmonization of national legislative and policy frameworks. Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at a national level might result in a review of national mine action plans, in relation to victim assistance provisions. The Secretary-General encourages non-signatory States to assess the impact of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on existing national legislation, with a view to ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

80. WHO work supporting trauma and disability care and rehabilitation, along with injury data collection, provides technical and normative guidance to countries and territories to improve survival and reduce disability for victims of all forms of injury, as well as accurately characterizing the injury burden. While this support is not targeted specifically at landmine injuries, the technical and normative guidance provided by WHO provides an example of how victim assistance can be integrated into national health and social welfare plans, programmes and frameworks.

D. Strategic objective 4: Assist the development of national institutions to manage the landmine/explosive remnants of war threat, and at the same time prepare for residual capacity in at least 15 countries

81. Particularly in programmes where UNDP and UNICEF provide technical support for Government-managed initiatives, the United Nations assists Governments to develop capacities that enable national mine action institutions to manage, coordinate and implement an appropriate response to the landmine and explosive remnants of war problem. In countries and territories with programmes managed by the United Nations Mine Action Service, the primary focus is on coordinating the implementation of mine action activities and to develop strategies for successful transition to national management and responsibility. The goal of all United Nations support is to ensure that all national mine action institutions can ultimately achieve mine action objectives with little to no international support through appropriately trained and equipped mine action capacities.

82. In Afghanistan, the United Nations Mine Action Service has worked since 2008, with the national Department of Mine Clearance to coordinate mine action activities, a major step towards nationalization of mine action in that country. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mine Action Service has been supporting the development of a national structure, created in 2008, by providing training and coordinating mine action activities. The United Nations Mine Action Service has also played a role in developing a legal framework that governs national structures, working with the army, police and civil society to establish a residual response capacity and advocating that the Government take ownership of the landmine and explosive remnants of war legacy.

83. In Iraq, UNDP has been supporting the Iraqi mine action authority and the Government in revising its original strategic plan. In 2008 and 2009, UNDP provided training sessions and workshops on strategic planning and supported the creation of operational clearance capacities through the establishment of a specialized NGO in southern Iraq. Furthermore, both UNDP and UNICEF supported efforts to build managerial capacities in Iraq by strengthening existing institutions.

84. In Jordan, the National Mine Action Plan for 2005-2009 has received strong governmental and international support. The country has developed national capacities, including a National Plan, Impact Survey, Mine Action Standards, Quality Management Team, Victim Database and Mine-Risk Education Programme. The National Plan is being re-engineered to consider transition issues and conclusion of United Nations support. In Kosovo, the national mine action programme and the United Nations worked together to develop a multi-year strategic plan for 2008-2010 and the United Nations continues to assist national capacities that were established in 2002. The United Nations supports these national capacities by providing equipment and a training programme.

85. In Lebanon, UNDP supported the drafting of keystone mine action plans, including an end-state strategy for United Nations mine action support, long-term plans and annual plans, by providing training, technical advice and administrative assistance. Both the United Nations Mine Action Service and UNDP have worked to provide support in Lebanon for the development of national capacities. Since 2007, the United Nations Mine Action Service has supported a transitional strategy by contributing equipment and human resources to the Lebanon Mine Action Centre from the Mine Action and Coordination Centre — south Lebanon following its closure. In Mauritania, UNDP has worked with the national authority and provided assistance in the development of a national strategy and a national plan for mine action.

86. In Mozambique, the national mine action plan for 2008-2012 has been developed to guide activities in the country. UNDP provides assistance by ensuring comprehensiveness and coherence in key strategic documents and supports compliance with international requirements by providing technical expertise and funds aimed at strengthening capacities. In Nepal, where a national plan has yet to be devised, mine action activities have been coordinated and developed mainly by the United Nations Mine Action Team.

87. In the northern regions of Somalia, UNDP has worked closely with national authorities to support the development of mine action plans and to provide technical support. A strategic plan has also been developed in the Somali region of "Puntland". The regional authority is responsible for the overall mine action

programme and the clearance team handles mine clearance activities. In the Somali region of "Somaliland" mine action is also coordinated by the regional authority, and UNDP has provided training and expert support in developing the effectiveness of mine action work.

88. The United Nations began developing mine action capacity in south central Somalia in early 2008. Some progress has been made in surveying communities and providing mine-risk education to returnees. The security situation, however, remains tenuous, thereby impacting the ability to carry out operational activities. In Niger, in 2008, UNDP assisted the Government in creating a mine action working group within the National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illicit Weapons in order to support the Government in the planning of its mine action activities.

89. The United Nations has assisted the Sudan to build national capacity by providing training courses on management and technical expertise, and by helping national authorities to establish their headquarters and offices.

90. In Tajikistan, UNDP assists the national mine action authority to enhance the effectiveness of the management, coordination, monitoring and quality assurance of operations. In Thailand, UNDP supports the national capacity development project aimed at enhancing strategic planning and coordination and the Government has developed several operational capacities including training centres and mine action units.

91. In Uganda, where the mine action programme is nationally owned and implemented, UNDP has provided financial support and technical assistance including for the development of national mine action standards, and a draft policy that guides mine action activities and the establishment of a national victims' database.

92. The work of the United Nations in building national mine action capacity has seen considerable progress in the reporting period. Many national strategic plans have been established with the support and expertise of the United Nations Mine Action Team. United Nations support has also been invaluable in developing capacity in many States, providing the financial and technical support needed to strengthen national mine action structures. There are, however, continuing challenges that require action. The United Nations Mine Action Team stands ready and will continue to assist affected States upon request.

IV. United Nations mine action agenda: looking forward

93. The previous sections of the present report illustrate the measurable progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010. As the United Nations Mine Action Team nears the completion of its current five-year strategy and considers new priorities and benchmarks for the United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2011-2015, the Secretary-General recognizes significant challenges that remain. The Second Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, to be held from 30 November to 4 December 2009 in Cartagena, Colombia, will produce a new Action Plan that will inform future United Nations assistance for the period 2011-2015. At Cartagena, the United Nations will report on the achievements to date and on lessons learned, and will outline priorities and challenges for the next five

years. The United Nations will take every opportunity to encourage States parties to maintain their support to mine action in accordance with international treaty obligations and ultimately end the suffering caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Maintaining adequate funding levels over the coming years for programmes and activities will be particularly important.

94. At the same time, additional challenges have emerged that require attention and may be subject to elaboration in the new United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2011-2015. The United Nations is responsible for the mitigation of the risks posed to peace operations by landmines, explosive remnants of war and, increasingly, improvised explosive devices that have been abandoned, stockpiled or failed to function. In accordance with policy discussions on improvised explosive devices between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Safety and Security, the United Nations Mine Action Service intends to develop further the capability to advise and assist peace operations in countering the threat and effects of these devices.

95. In addition, mine action organizations have been the primary responders to uncontrolled explosions in ammunition storage facilities. The need for providing technical assistance to States on the safe destruction of degraded and obsolete ammunition stockpiles and technical advice on safe ammunition storage and stockpile management appears to be increasing.

96. As the Department of Peacekeeping Operations focal point for the rights of persons with disabilities, the United Nations Mine Action Service is playing an active role within the United Nations Mine Action Team in developing an advocacy campaign on persons affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war. In consultation with OHCHR, UNHCR and UNICEF, the United Nations Mine Action Service will continue to expand the dissemination of the Disabilities Advocacy Toolkit to sensitize States not yet parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to its provisions.

97. The United Nations Mine Action Team, Member States and the mine action community at large must remain committed to the work that remains to realize the goals of existing international instruments and those about to enter into force, and ultimately to ending the suffering caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war, while responding to emerging threats. Therefore, the Secretary-General recommends a forward-looking agenda in which Member States:

(a) Remain coordinated and committed to the goal of ending the suffering caused by mines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions remnants, by abandoned ammunition and by improvised explosive devices through the consistent provision of necessary resources in particular to support the building and development and strengthening of national capacities in mine action;

(b) Ratify or accede to the legal framework for mine action: the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention; the Convention on Conventional Weapons Amended Protocol II and Protocol V; the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol;

(c) That are parties to Protocol V, reach agreement on establishing standards for its effective implementation that best ensures the protection of civilian populations drawing on lessons learned from the implementation of other relevant treaties;

(d) Continue to support the development of a United Nations capacity for rapid deployment that will directly contribute to the protection of civilians and the efficient work of humanitarian operations in emergency and early recovery situations;

(e) Continue to reflect in United Nations resolutions the critical role of mine action to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, including the efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons;

(f) Continue to ensure that sufficient national and international resources are made available to mine action activities, including in support of sustainable development, in emergency, humanitarian and peace operations;

(g) Mainstream mine action into development plans to ensure that clearance activities are adequately resourced and aligned with broader development priorities and plans;

(h) Exploit the advantage of sophisticated mechanical equipment available today and increase the mechanization of mine and explosive remnants of war clearance, where appropriate;

(i) Acknowledge the potential role of the United Nations Mine Action Service, within the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in relation to appropriate advice and assistance to peace operations in regard to countering the effects of improvised explosive devices and other explosive remnants of war in cooperation with other units of the Office;

(j) Support all United Nations Mine Action Team members in the successful implementation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy 2006-2010 and in the development of a future Mine Action Strategy 2011-2015;

And in concert with the broader mine action community:

(k) Increase their efforts to promote compliance with the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Conventional Weapons Amended Protocol II and Protocol V, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol;

(l) Expand resources and increase programming for all persons with disabilities, including mine and explosive remnants of war survivors, particularly in the health, social welfare, education and employment sectors, guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

(m) Prevent harm to civilians, particularly children, by providing effective warnings, risk education and other preventive measures to protect their populations from the direct and indirect effects of landmines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, and improvised explosive devices;

(n) Take concrete steps to ensure that mine action programmes have an equal impact on women, men, boys and girls and that they all enjoy equal access, and have an equal decision-making role in mine action in their respective communities, and monitor the extent and effectiveness of those efforts;

(o) Continue to develop and implement methodologies for the systematic assessment of the impact of mine action activities on all members of beneficiary communities in order to secure the most effective operational tasking and use of released land.